

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEL AV 02717 161600Z

71

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1095

INFO AMEMBASSY CAPETOWN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2717

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, SF

SUBJECT: VISIT TO ISRAEL OF PRIME MINISTER VORSTER

REFS: (A) TEL AVIV 2691, (B) STATE 91610, (C) CAPETOWN 0435

BEGIN SUMMARY: ISRAELI MFA AND SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVES REGARD VORSTER VISIT AS POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO STRENGTHENING ISRAELI/SOUTH AFRICAN TIES. IN ADDITION TO REVIEW OF BILATERAL RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA, MAIN RESULT OF VISIT APPEARS TO BE ESTABLISHMENT OF CABINET LEVEL JOINTECONOMIC COMMISSION TO DEVELOP CLOSER ECONOMIC/ FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL COORDINATION. BOTH SIDES DEINED THAT THERE WERE ANY SPECIFIC DISCUSSIONS OF ARMS SALES ALTHOUGH POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE CONSIDERATION OF ARMS DEALS WAS NOT DISCOUNTED. FOR THE RECORD, ISRAELIS HAVE PLAYED DOWN POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE THIRD WORLD; IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS SENIOR ISRAELIS HAVE ACKNOWLEDEGED THAT VISIT MAY HAVE DONE SOME DAMAGE TO ISRAELI IMAGE. EMBASSY COMMENT FOLLOWS SEPTTEL. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY OFFICERS DISCUSSED THE VISIT TO ISRAEL OF SOUTH

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TEL AV 02717 161600Z

AFRICAN PRIME MINISTER VORSTER WITH YESHAYAHU ANUG, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND WITH A.E. VAN NIEKERK, POLITICAL COUNSELOR OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY, TEL AVIV, WHO PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENTS AND COMMENTS REGARDING THE VISIT.

2. ISRAELI VIEW. ANUG BEGAN HIS ASSESSMENT COMMENTING THAT VORSTER WAS A "CHANGED MAN" FROM THE EXTREMIST WHO HAD TAKEN OVER FROM VERWOERD. HE HAS BECOME MATURE AND CAUTIOUS DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS AND HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY ACTIVE IN RECENT MONTHS REGARDING BOTH INTERNAL REFORMS AND SOUTH AFRICA'S RELATIONS WITH BLACK AFRICAN STATES, ALTHOUGH HE FEELS THAT SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC OPINION IS NOT YET READY TO ACCEPT ALL OF HIS IDEAS AND PLANS REGARDING OVERTURES TOWARD OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES. HE CHARACTERIZED THE PRIME MINISTER AS A DEVOUT CHRISTIAN AND SAID THE VISIT TO ISRAEL HAD HAD STRONG RELIGIOUS UNDERTONES.

3. HE DESCRIBED VORSTER AS HAVING BEEN RECENTLY VERY POSITIVE REGARDING ISRAEL AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA, WHICH IS VERY SUPPORTIVE OF ISRAEL. FOR EXAMPLE, VORSTER HAD GRANTED THAT COMMUNITY FREEDOM OF CAPITAL TRANSFERS AND THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL IS GRATEFUL FOR THIS.

4. ACCORDING TO ANUG VORSTER BELIEVES THAT BOTH SOUTH AFRICA AND ISRAEL SHARE A COMMON MISSION AND ARE BOTH SURROUNDED BY EXTERNAL ENEMIES WITH SIMILAR INTENTIONS. VORSTER BELIEVES IN ISRAEL'S SURVIVAL AND ISRAELI LEADERS HAVE FOUND NO TRACE OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN HIS RECENT ACTIVITIES OR STATEMENTS; THEY ATTRIBUTE HIS INTERNMENT DURING WWII AS HAVING BEEN DUE TO ANTI-BRITISH RATHER THAN PRO--"8 6.0-5#83 . IN THIS CONNECTION THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, AFTER SOME DELIBERATION, INCLUDED A VISIT TO THE YAD VASHEM MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST, AND WAS PLEASED AT THE APPARENT IMPRESSION IT MADE ON VORSTER.

5. VORSTER TOLD HIS ISRAELI HOSTS THAT HE WAS NOT CONCERNED OVER DEVELOPMENTS IN MOZAMBIQUE OR ANGOLA OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS. HE SAID HE WAS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN AN ONGOING  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEL AV 02717 161600Z

DIALOGUE" WITH THE LEADERS OF BOTH COUNTRIES. REGARDING THE CUBANS, HE SAID THAT THEIR ROLE IN THESE COUNTRIES REMAINED TO BE DEFINED AND WOULD DEPEND UPON THE USE AFROANS THEMSELVES FEEL THEY COULD MAKE OF THEM. HE ALSO SAID THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD FREQUENT CONTACT WITH A TOTAL OF 14 BLACK AFRICAN NATIONS, INCLUDING, THE ISRAELIS BELIEVE, NIGERIA AND ZAIRE. ANUG SAID IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD ACHIEVED A GREAT DEAL IN RECENT YEARS IN DEVELOPING RELATIONS WITH OTHER

AFRICAN STATES.

6. ANUG STRESSED THAT THERE WERE NO MILITARY IMPLICATIONS TO THE VISIT; NO MILITARY ASSISTANCE WAS DISCUSSED AND NO MILITARY SALES CONSIDERED. REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE HE SAID THE TWO INTERLOCUTORS WOULD BE THE ISRAELI MINISTER OF FINANCE AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTER OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS. AMONG OTHER AGENDA ITEMS OF THE ANNUAL MINISTERIAL MEETINGS ARE LIKELY TO BE JOINT VENTURES USING SOUTH AFRICAN RAW MATERIALS AND ISRAELI TECHNOLOGY AND MANPOWER WILL BE CONSIDERED.

7. ANUG SAID THAT KENYA WAS SO FAR THE ONLY AFRICAN STATE WHICH HAS EXPRESSED DISAPPROVAL OF THE VISIT. SEVERAL EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS, PARTICULARLY THE NETHERLANDS, HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR DISAPPROVAL BUT ANUG SAID HE DID NOT EXPECT FURTHER REPERCUSSIONS. HE NOTED THAT SOME OBSERVERS HAD SUGGESTED THAT ISRAEL MAKE A STRONG ANTI-APARTHEID STATEMENT BUT THE GOVERNMENT FEELS THAT ITS VIEWS AGAINST APARTHEID ARE WELL KNOWN AND THAT NO STATEMENT IS NECESSARY.

8. ANUG WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE ANTICIPATED A CHANGE IN THE WEST'S VIEW OF SOUTH AFRICA - A CHANGE WHICH WILL BE MADE EASIER BY THE CURRENT INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA. IN HIS OPINION SOUTH AFRICA REMAINS ONE OF THE LAST ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY BASTIONS AND THE WEST SHOULD BE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO ANY SIGNALS FROM SOUTH AFRICA THAT IT DESIRES TO IMPROVE ITS INTERNATIONAL POSITION. HE SAID HE HOPED THAT U.S. WOULD SHOW UNDERSTANDING OF THESE VIEWS AND WOULD TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE SECRETARY'S FORTHCOMING VISIT TO CONVINCE AFRICAN STATES TO BE AS RESPONSIVE AS POSSIBLE TO CHANGES IN SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY.  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 TEL AV 02717 161600Z

9. VORSTER APPARENTLY HAD LITTLE TO SAY ABOUT RHODESIA OTHER THAN THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD DO WHAT IT COULD TO URGE GREATER FLEXIBILITY ON SMITH.

10. IN CONCLUDING ANUG SAID THAT IT WAS IN ISRAEL'S INTEREST TO MAINTAIN AS GOOD RELATIONS AS POSSIBLE WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND THERE HAS BEEN NO POINT IN OFFENDING THE VISITORS OR MAKING THEM FEEL UNWELCOME.

11. SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY VIEW: VAN NIEKERK OF SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY SIMILARLY EXPRESSED SATISFACTION OVER VORSTER VISIT. THE AGREEMENT FOR THE VISIT HAD BEEN MADE IN STRICT SECRECY ABOUT A YEAR AGO IN CONJUNCTION WITH SOUTH AFRICAN PLANS TO ESTABLISH FULL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL (A STEP

WHICH TOOK PLACE SEVERAL MONTHS AGO), AND HAD NOT BEEN  
DIVULGED EVEN TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN CABINET UNTIL TWO WEEKS PRIOR  
TO VISIT. IT WAS BELIEVED THAT WITHIN SUCH A SHORT TIME NEITHER  
INTERNAL OPPOSITION WITHIN THE TWO COUNTRIES NOR "INTERNATIONAL  
DIPLOMACY" COULD BUILD UP ENOUGH STEAM TO INTERFERE WITH PLANS  
ALREADY MADE.

12. REPORTEDLY FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON HAD BEEN IN FAVOR OF THE  
VISIT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. HOWEVER, HE PREFERRED THE COVER  
OF A PRIVATE, UNOFFICIAL VISIT. RABIN WAS LESS INTERESTED IN  
MAKING THIS FINE DISTINCTION AND ANNOUNCED IN THE KNESSET THAT  
PRIME MINISTER VORSTER WAS HIS PERSONAL GUEST AND THAT MADE THE  
"VISIT" OFFICIAL.

13. WITH REGARD TO CONCRETE DISCUSSIONS AND AGREEMENTS, VAN  
NIEKERK ESSENTIALLY CONFIRMED WHAT ANUG HAD TOLD US, ADDING  
THAT THE VISIT HAD SERVED TO STRESS THE HIGHER PRIORITY WHICH  
BOTH PRIME MINISTERS ATTACHED TO MUTUAL COOPERATION. REGARDING  
COOPERATION IN THE FIELDS OF MILITARY TECHNOLOGY AND ARMS  
TRADE, VAN NIEKERK DENIED ANY SPECIFIC DECISION, AND SAIKR  
LL  
LY THAT IF THE MATTER CAME UP IN THE FUTURE IT COULD BE  
REVIEWED BY THE JOINT MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE.

14. IMPLYING THAT THE INITIATIVE FOR STRENGTHENING ISRAELI-  
SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS HAD COME FROM HIS GOVERNMENT, HE POINTED  
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PAGE 05 TEL AV 02717 161600Z

OUT THAT VORSTER'S VISIT A  
NEW POLICY WERE VERY POPULAR IN  
SOUTH AFRICA AND HAD RECEIVED PRAISE EVEN FROM THE OPPOSITION  
PRESS. HE ATTRIBUTED THE POPULARITY OF ISRAEL IN HIS COUNTRY  
NOT ONLY TO THE COMMON EXPERIENCE OF CONFRONTATION WITH THE  
THIRD WORLD, BUT ALSO TO THE STRONG RELIGIOUS FEELINGS OF  
THE AFRIKAANS COMMUNITY.

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